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ABSTRACT

This lesson traces the use of Eleanor Roosevelt's retreat, Val-Kill, a "shack" (actually a stone cottage) built in 1925 on the grounds of the Roosevelt family estate at Hyde Park (New York), and how it nurtured her spirit, personal style, and humanitarian efforts. The lesson explains that Eleanor and her women friends later expanded the retreat by converting a factory building into Val-Kill Cottage, where Eleanor moved permanently after her husband's death in 1945. The unit is based on the National Register of Historic Places registration file, "Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site", and other source materials. The lesson can be used in U.S. history courses, in units on efforts to achieve world peace during the 1950s, or on human rights and civil rights issues. Students will learn about Eleanor Roosevelt's contributions as a humanitarian. It is divided into the following teaching activities sections: "Setting the Stage: Historical Context"; "Locating the Site: Maps" (Eleanor Roosevelt NHS and Surrounding Region; Eleanor Roosevelt's Home at Val-Kill); "Determining the Facts: Readings" (Eleanor Roosevelt at Val-Kill; Goodwill Ambassador to the World; Universal Declaration of Human Rights; A Complex Woman); "Visual Evidence: Images" (Val-Kill; Members of UNESCO Meet with Eleanor Roosevelt; Eleanor Roosevelt Lunches with Future President, August 17, 1960; Eleanor Roosevelt Hosts Visitors from Overseas); and "Putting It All Together: Activities" (My Day; The Declaration of Human Rights; Local Volunteer Organizations). (BT)

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Teaching with Historic Places

First Lady of the World: Eleanor Roosevelt at Val-Kill

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Teaching with Historic Places
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
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First Lady of the World
Eleanor Roosevelt at Val-Kill

"My Missus and some of her female political friends want to build a shack on a stream in the back woods and want, instead of a beautiful marble bath, to have the stream dug out so as to form an old-fashioned swimming hole."

This is how Franklin D. Roosevelt described his wife Eleanor's ambition to build a retreat for herself and her friends away from the big family house at Hyde Park, New York. The "shack," built in 1925 near a gently flowing stream, was actually a stone cottage situated on land FDR offered the women for their lifetime use.

The following year, the women had a second building constructed on the site to house a small furniture factory. After the factory closed in1936, Roosevelt converted the building into a cottage for herself, her secretary, and guests, and christened it "Val-Kill Cottage." She used the cottage only sparingly until the death of FDR in 1945. Then, she moved permanently to Val-Kill. She had once described Val-Kill as the place "where I used to find myself and grow" and where "I emerged as an individual." It was truly her home and the place where she came into her own. She gained strength and inspiration from the pastoral surroundings.

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About This Lesson

This lesson is based on the National Register of Historic Places registration file "Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site" and other source materials. It was written by Todd Stoeberl, former Park Ranger, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.

Where it fits into the curriculum

The lesson could be used in American history courses in units on efforts to achieve world peace during the Cold War in the 1950s, or on human rights and civil rights issues. Students will learn about Eleanor Roosevelt's contributions as a humanitarian.

Objectives for students

1) To describe the general setting at Val-Kill and explain how it nurtured Eleanor Roosevelt's spirit, personal style, and humanitarian efforts.

2) To describe some of the people Roosevelt invited to her home and indicate how these visitors reflected her interests.

3) To examine the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and explain Roosevelt's involvement in its creation.

4) To investigate their own community for volunteer organizations dedicated to helping others.

Materials for students

The materials listed below either can be used directly on the computer or can be printed out, photocopied, and distributed to students. The photographs appear twice: in a low-resolution version with associated questions and alone in a larger, high-resolution version.

1) Two maps of the area;

2) Three readings about Roosevelt's life at Val-Kill, her humanitarian causes, and some of the activities that took place at her home;

3) A copy of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

4) Five photos of Val-Kill and some of the guests Roosevelt hosted there.

Visiting the site

Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site is located on Route 9G in Hyde Park, New York. All organized groups must make reservations in order to visit the site. For more information, contact the Superintendent, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, 519 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park, NY 12538 or visit the park web pages at http://www.nps.gov/elro/

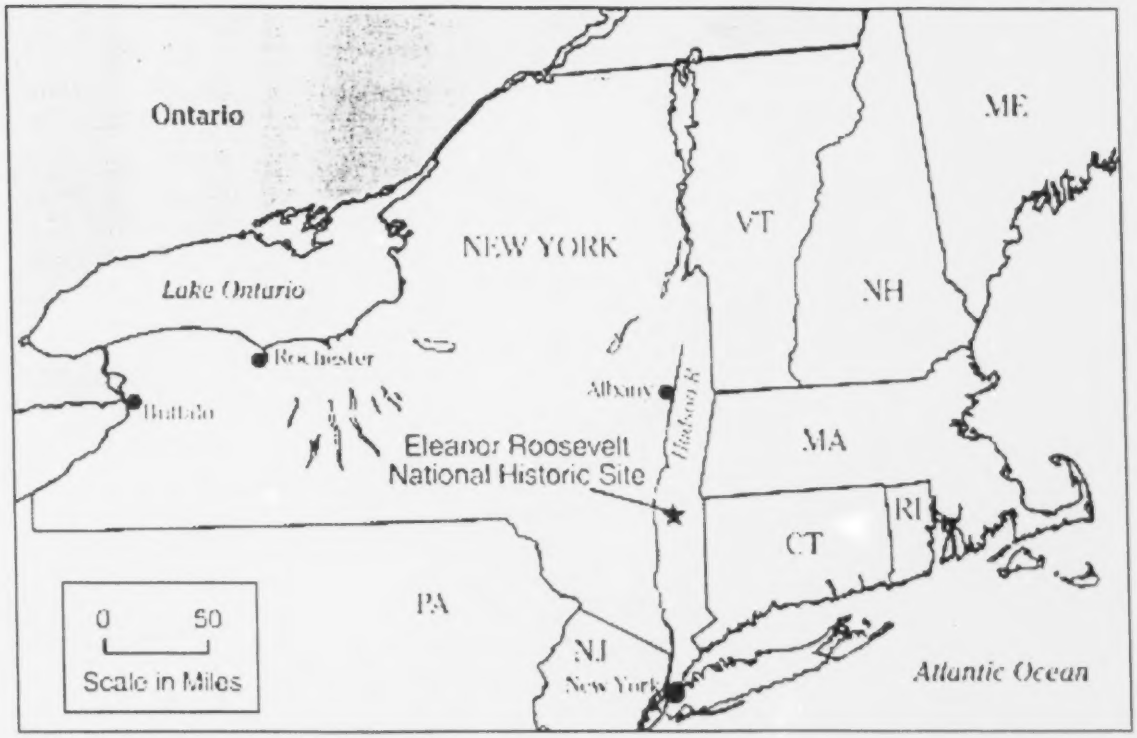
Setting the Stage

Explain to students that Anna Eleanor Roosevelt was born in New York on October 11, 1884 to a wealthy family. After attending school in England as a teenager, Roosevelt returned home to New York where she began working with the city's poor immigrants. In 1905 she married her distant cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt, a well-connected Columbia University Law School student. In 1921 FDR, who had already served as a New York state senator and assistant secretary of the navy under President Woodrow Wilson, contracted polio. Eleanor Roosevelt began to engage in a more public life, making speeches and official appearances for the Democratic party so that her husband's name would not be forgotten. She became her husband's "eyes, ears and legs" as she campaigned for him. Discovering that she had a liking for politics herself, Roosevelt began working enthusiastically for women's rights and other progressive causes.

After FDR became president in 1933, he announced a "New Deal" for America. Eleanor Roosevelt toured the country extensively and gathered information used to formulate plans to combat the Great Depression. She conveyed her accounts of the conditions she witnessed and urged immediate action for relief. Before that work was completed, however, World War II began. The First Lady supported the war effort vigorously, spending much of her time visiting the wounded in hospitals at home and overseas. After her husband's death in 1945, Roosevelt was appointed as United States delegate to the United Nations, where she became an outspoken advocate for its Declaration of Human Rights. She continued her widely-syndicated newspaper column "My Day" that she had begun writing in 1936, and which served as a diary open to the American public. She campaigned for Democratic presidential candidates Adlai Stevenson and John F. Kennedy and continued her travels abroad. She visited many world leaders and entertained many at Val-Kill, her home in Hyde Park, New York. In her lifelong pursuit of humanitarian ideals, Eleanor Roosevelt would earn the title "First Lady of the World," a label bestowed on her by President Harry S. Truman.

Teaching Activities--Locating the Site

Map 1: Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site and Surrounding Region.



(Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site)

In 1911 FDR had purchased a parcel of property that adjoined the Roosevelt family estate in Hyde Park, New York, in order to plant trees. The Roosevelts enjoyed using this additional land for picnics and family gatherings. Val-Kill, as the property was called, was named after the nearby stream known as Fall Kill, which means "valley stream" in Dutch. "Val-Kill" is a combination of the Dutch name and its English translation.

1. Locate Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (Val-Kill) and note that it is located in the Hudson River Valley.

2. A road and railroad run parallel to the Hudson River all the way to New York City. Use the map scale to calculate the distance from Val-Kill to New York City, where Roosevelt frequently commuted by train. Why would Roosevelt have needed to travel to New York City on a regular basis?

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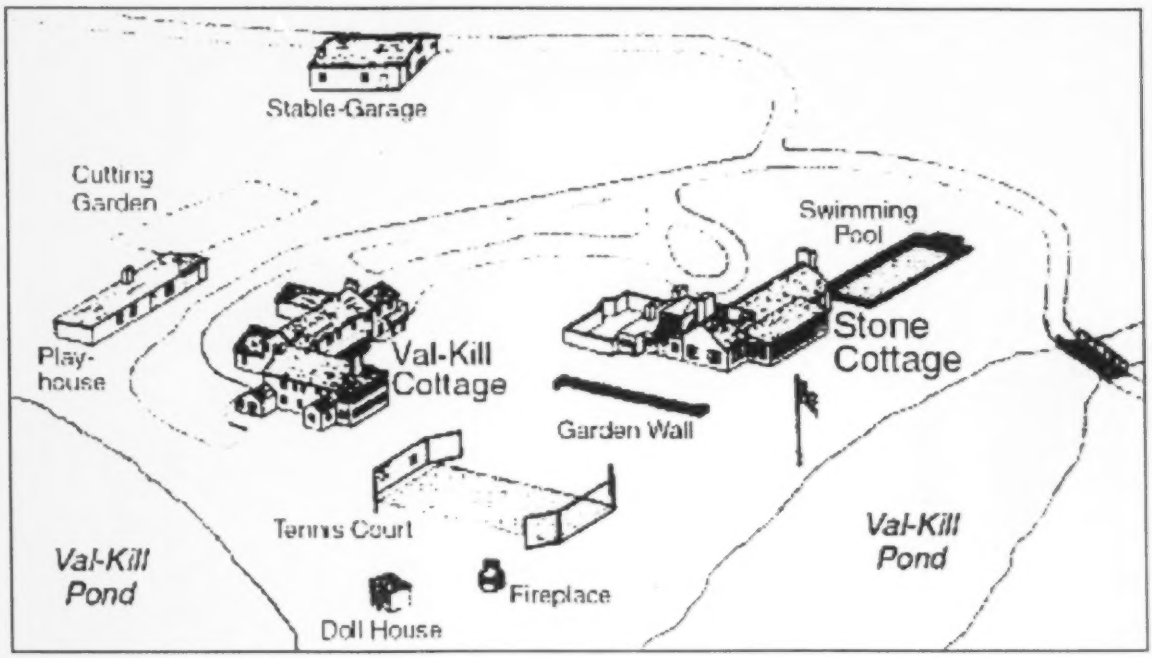
Teaching Activities--Locating the Site

Map 2: Eleanor Roosevelt's Home at Val-Kill.



(Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site)

In 1925 Eleanor Roosevelt had a stone cottage constructed on a portion of the property to serve as a retreat for herself and her friends. A year later a second building was constructed to house a small furniture factory to employ local craftsmen. After the factory closed in 1936, the building was converted to a cottage. It was this cottage (christened "Val-Kill Cottage") that Roosevelt chose to use as her permanent home after her husband's death in1945.

1. Locate the Stone Cottage and Val-Kill Cottage.

2. What can you tell about the kinds of activities that took place at Val-Kill?

3. Would you have called a home like Roosevelt's a "cottage"?

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Teaching Activities--Determining the Facts

Reading 1: Eleanor Roosevelt at Val-Kill

When Franklin D. Roosevelt died in April 1945, Eleanor Roosevelt told a reporter that "the story is over." In fact, the story of this stalwart woman's life was far from over. Upon leaving the White House, she retreated to Val-Kill. She described her life there in an autobiography:

> For myself, I knew I would live in the cottage that I had made out of my furniture factory...two miles back from the big house at Hyde Park. Tommy [Malvina Thompson--Roosevelt's personal secretary] already had an apartment there. My cottage has a small apartment for the couple who work for me, two living rooms, a dining room, seven bedrooms, a dormitory for young people, two large porches downstairs and a sleeping porch upstairs. The cottage was an adjunct to our lives at Hyde Park, but it was mine and I felt freer there than in the big house....
>
> I have led a busy life for many years and it has not seemed less busy since the death of my husband. In the years since 1945 my life has been complicated in some ways because my working hours are long. I travel a great deal and see many people. But in another way I live very simply, so simply that not a few visitors, especially those from some distant countries whose servants are plentiful as well as inexpensive, are often surprised to find that I plan the meals, do part of the daily shopping, and serve dinner for a dozen guests with a "staff" consisting of a couple in the country, one maid in town....
>
> My mother-in-law once remarked that I liked to 'keep a hotel' and I probably still do.... There usually seem to be plenty of guests there and they may include almost anyone from the Emperor of Ethiopia to my newest great-grandchild. Sometimes there are so many guests that they arrive by the busload--perhaps a group of college students from various foreign countries...or perhaps a crowd of seventy-five or so employees of the United Nations who have been invited for a picnic....
>
> My picnic ground is a large one and in summers it is used perhaps once or twice a week by some school or social group and, if I am there, I always try to stop by to speak to them for a few minutes. Otherwise they have to take care of themselves.

> For that matter, my own guests at Hyde Park usually have to fend for themselves much of the time because there are certain periods every day when I have to be busy at my work. There is a pool where they can swim, a tennis court, a stream full of water lilies and a boat, and plenty of room for walking over the countryside....
>
> I drive my own car at Hyde Park, sometimes meet guests at the railroad station five miles from my cottage and do much of my own shopping at roadside stands. During the summer months I keep the deep freeze well stocked and always try to be prepared to feed any number up to twenty--most of them unexpected--for luncheon.

Eleanor Roosevelt was a gracious hostess to all her visitors. One particular group she hosted every summer was the Wiltwyck School, which was established to provide for neglected and abandoned children. She served on the school's Board of Directors and provided it with financial assistance. Roosevelt described a typical Wiltwyck School outing:

> Each year I also have a picnic for about 150 youngsters from Wiltwyck School for delinquent boys. On that occasion I always try to enlist the help of my grandchildren, who wait on the guests and organize outdoor games. We feed the boys plenty and then they usually lie on the grass for a while and I read them a story such as Kipling's "Rikki-tikki-tavi" or "How the Elephant Got His Trunk." We also have a package of candy for each boy before they go home.

1. How many people did Roosevelt employ, and what types of jobs did they perform?

2. What types of people did Roosevelt invite to visit or stay at Val-Kill? What activities could visitors participate in?

3. What kinds of daily life activities did Roosevelt perform? Would you have expected a wealthy president's widow to do those things? Why or why not?

4. What was the purpose of the Wiltwyck School?

5. What activities did Roosevelt plan for the boys when they came to Val-Kill?

Reading 1 was compiled from The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt by Eleanor Roosevelt. Copyright 1937, 1949, 1958, 1961 by Anna Eleanor Roosevelt. Copyright 1958 by Curtis Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Teaching Activities--Determining the Facts

Reading 2: Goodwill Ambassador to the World

Eleanor Roosevelt had a passion for learning about people and places. She once wrote:

> It was not until I reached middle years that I had the courage to develop interests of my own, outside of my duties to my family. In the beginning, it seems to me now, I had no goal beyond the interests themselves, in learning about people and conditions and the world outside our own United States. Almost at once I began to discover that interest leads to interest, knowledge leads to more knowledge, the capacity for understanding grows with the effort to understand (Roosevelt, 412).

Roosevelt not only entertained guests from the United States but from all over the world. In 1965, Dr. Franz Jonas president of Austria, described his1952 visit with her while serving as Mayor of Vienna:

> After the sightseeing tour, we were invited for lunch at Mrs. Roosevelt's home at Val-Kill and I was looking forward a great deal to meeting the venerable former First Lady. I immediately felt at home in Mrs. Roosevelt's country house. It was furnished in a style which we Viennese would call gemutlich [an Austrian word meaning warm, home-like feeling]. As I recall, also present at that lunch was a Lebanon representative to the United Nations. Mrs. Roosevelt was so animated and natural a hostess that I soon forgot to be conscious of my limited knowledge of the English language. She made me feel that a topic in which she was not interested simply did not exist. She spoke of various world matters with such assurance and such matter-of-factness that it was evident she had studied the problems thoroughly. Her main interest seemed to be the question of peace and international understanding. But equally important to her seemed to be the question of schools and education in the United States (Hershan, 80).

Roosevelt's passionate interest in the world's people was fulfilled by her appointment in 1946 to the United Nations General Assembly by President Harry S. Truman. This work required her to travel extensively for several years. She frequently commuted to New York City by train. From there she boarded a plane or a ship and traveled to many countries over the years. She became chairperson of the UN Human Rights Commission, and in two short years she became the principal author and foremost proponent of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was

her work in drafting this document and in gaining its acceptance that she considered the most important work of her life. It took a bitter struggle to get it passed by the United Nation's General Assembly. Much of the opposition to the document came from the Soviet Union and other communist countries. In the end, however, there were no votes against the adoption of the Declaration in1948, but several countries did abstain from voting.

1. How did Eleanor Roosevelt explain how her interest in people led to other interests?

2. What kind of atmosphere did visitors to Val-Kill find?

3. What did Roosevelt consider her greatest accomplishment? Why do you think it was so important to her?

4. From your knowledge of history, would you have expected the Soviet Union to be opposed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

5. What qualities do you think Roosevelt possessed that made her a particularly valuable delegate to the newly organized United Nations?

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Teaching Activities--Determining the Facts

Document 1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Following is the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights as adopted on December 10, 1948.

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore, the General Assembly proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-selfgoverning or under ahy other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted himby the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11

(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until

proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17

(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23

(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthyof human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized. Article 29

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for anyState, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

Courtesy of the United Nations.

1. What are some of the categories of rights that are addressed in the Declaration of Human Rights?

2. To whom do these rights apply?

3. What event do you think prompted the United Nations to set forth these rights? Why?

4. What United States document is similar to the Declaration of Human Rights? Make a list of the similarities and differences between the two documents.

5. Roosevelt was 64 when she helped write this document. Do you think her contribution to the United Nations and her worldwide acceptance as a bright and caring woman could have acted as an inspiration to other women of her generation? Why or why not?

Teaching Activities--Determining the Facts

Reading 3: A Complex Woman

Eleanor Roosevelt genuinely cared for people and tried to do whatever she could to help those who were less fortunate than herself. Sometimes, however, this got her into trouble. Her visit to Communist Russia was particularly controversial. Simply because she was willing to travel to the USSR, and even though she made it clear that she hoped to encourage the Soviet people to back the United Nations, she was accused of being involved with communist organizations and in a plot against Christianity. She was to write of this episode:

> We in America seem to have almost forgotten what it means to do a selling job for Democracy. Not so in Russia. They plan on a complete coverage of everything they do. We seem to forget we educate our young people for a different purpose. The Soviets want completely disciplined people while we want good citizens for a Democracy. I am constantly impressed with how much we need to learn....We seem to have lost respect for learning as learning and we are not fond of new thinking (Hershan, 188-89).

Roosevelt was also questioned about how she could support John F. Kennedy, a Roman Catholic, for president of the United States. Her reply was that:

> As a Democrat I am supporting Mr. Kennedy because I think he will make a good and liberal president. Our constitution grants freedom of religion and equality of opportunity to all. After all, a candidate should be judged on his abilities to fill the highest office of our country and not on his religious affiliations (Hershan, 191).

She reported that she had "learned that the only way to cope with unfair critics is to ignore them and not to lower oneself by answering back" (Hershan, 193). It seemed nothing stood in the way of Roosevelt's convictions and her belief in the American right to free expression.

When she died in November 1962, newspapers in big cities and small towns across the nation and throughout the world wrote of her great accomplishments. An example of the accolades paid to Roosevelt appears in an editorial Hope Strong wrote for a Lima, Ohio, newspaper:

> A great lady is to be laid to rest today. Eleanor Roosevelt was perhaps our most famous First Lady; but she was more. To much of the world she became a symbol of American Humanitarianism. To much of America she became an example of the increasingly important role of women in our nation. She was an outstanding woman even at a time when many women were rising to new heights of acclaim never before achieved by her sex. Mrs. Roosevelt was controversial. But she was respected by everyone. Even by those...who disliked her (Hershan, 189-90).

1. Why might some people have thought that Eleanor Roosevelt was a Communist? How did this notion reflect the political climate of the time?

2. How did Roosevelt respond to her critics?

3. Do you think Roosevelt is as controversial a figure today as she was in her own time? Why or why not?

Reading 4 was compiled from Stella K. Hershan, Eleanor Roosevelt--A Woman of Quality (Hyde Park, New York: Hyde Park Gift Shop, Inc., 1970).

Teaching Activities--Visual Evidence

Photo 1a: Panoramic View of Val-Kill, 1947.

(Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site)

Photo 1b:Val-Kill Cottage.

(Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site)

1. Do Photos 1a and 1b help you to understand the effect Val-Kill had on Eleanor Roosevelt's emotions?

2. What are your impressions of the site?

Teaching Activities--Visual Evidence

Photo 2: Members of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Meet with Eleanor Roosevelt, July 1948.

(Franklin D. Roosevelt Museum and Library Collection)

1. Find Eleanor Roosevelt in the photo. Who are the other people present? Do they seem interested in Roosevelt?

2. What is the setting for this photo? How does it reflect the way Roosevelt lived at Val-Kill?

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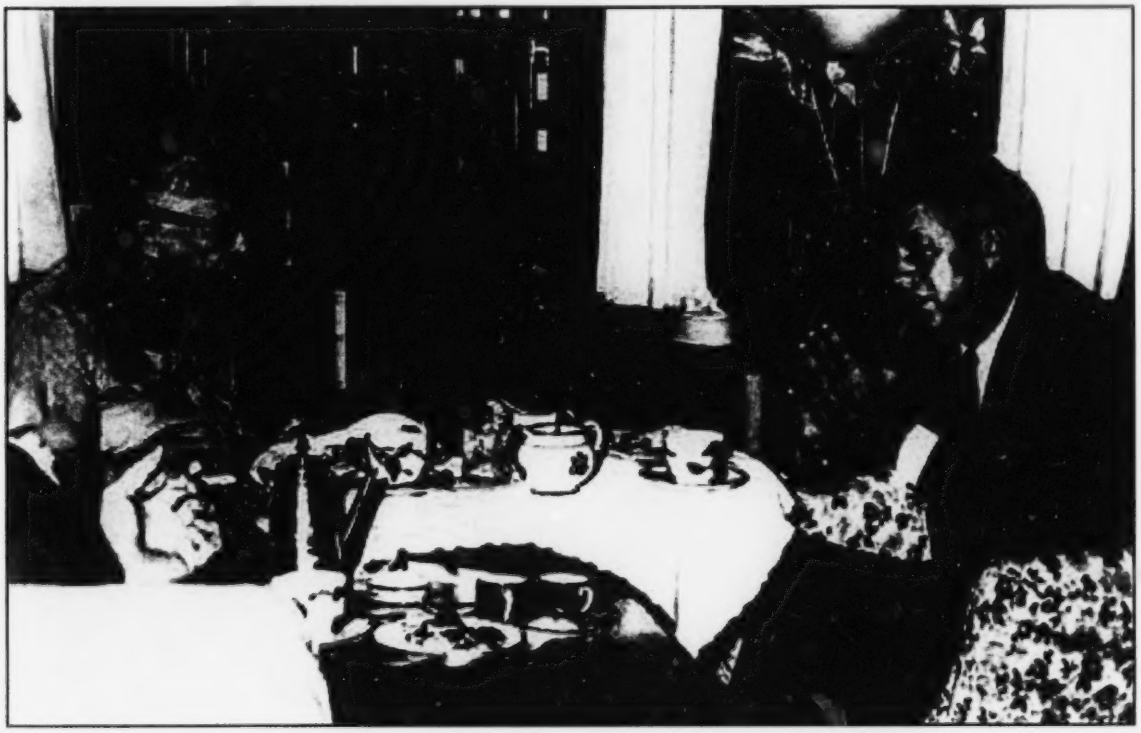
Teaching Activities--Visual Evidence

Photo 3: Eleanor Roosevelt Lunches with a Future President, August 17, 1960.



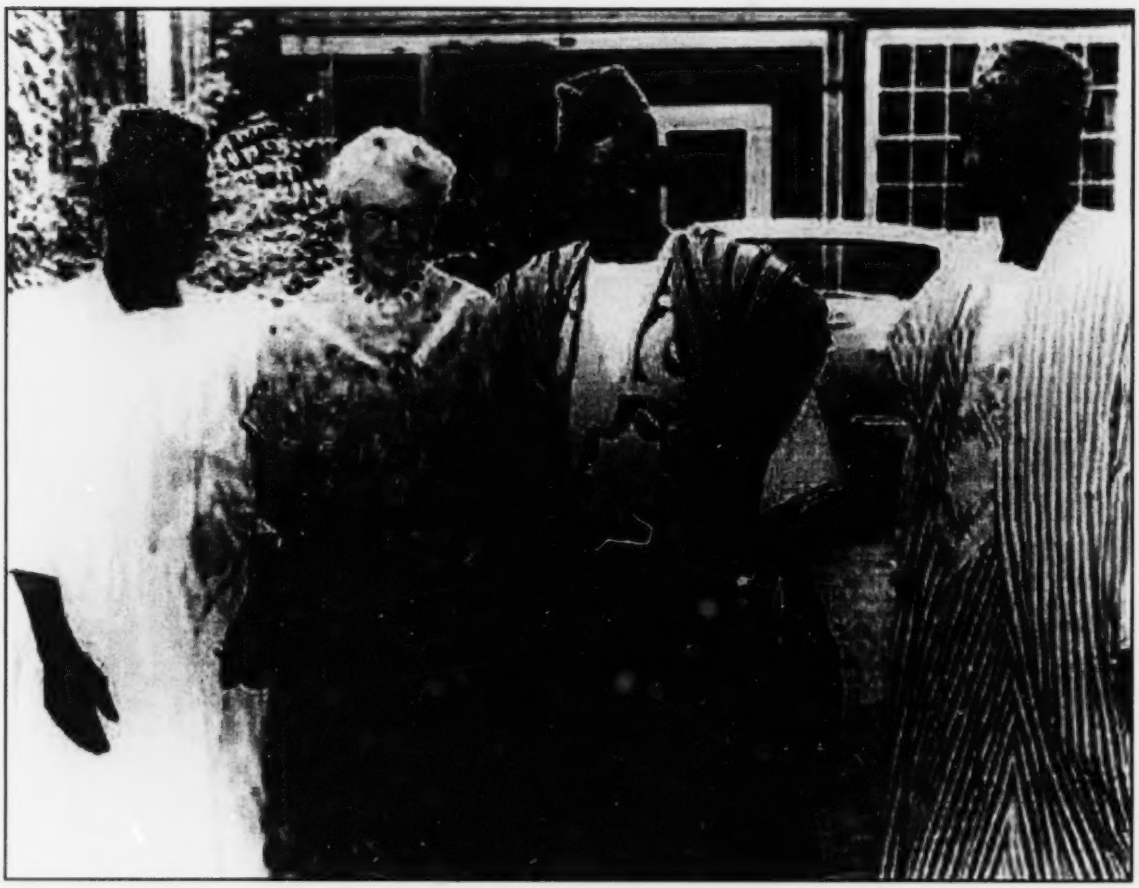
(Photo taken by Mrs. Roosevelt's personal phyician, Dr. A. David Gurewitsch)

1. Who is seated with Roosevelt in this photo? Considering the date the photo was taken, why might he have been paying a call on her?

2. What does the photo tell you about the appearance of the interior of Roosevelt's house?

Teaching Activities--Visual Evidence

Photo 4: Eleanor Roosevelt Hosts Visitors from Overseas, August 1961.



(George Brown, Franklin D. Roosevelt Museum and Library Collection)

1. What cautery (or region) do you think the guests shown in the photo might have been from? What are the clues that help you reach that conclusion?

2. What kinds of issues might these visitors to Val-Kill have discussed with Roosevelt?

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Putting It All Together

Val-Kill was a very special place for Eleanor Roosevelt and for anyone who came to visit her. She gained personal growth and inspiration from the place as well as needed relaxation. Some of her greatest accomplishments came about in the later years of her life. The following activities highlight her interests in humanitarian efforts.

Activity 1: My Day

Almost every day for more than 25 years, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote a newspaper column she called "My Day." The column was started in 1936 to give readers a view of what a First Lady does during her day at the White House or wherever she may be traveling. Roosevelt wrote her column Sunday through Friday so every newspaper reader in the United States knew what she was doing or thinking on particular days.

Have students keep a personal journal every day for two weeks. Have them reflect on their place in the community and the world, and think about how much of their time is spent in community service or personal growth. At the end of the two weeks, have volunteer students share their thoughts with the class. Then ask the class to compare their own activities and thoughts about the world with what they have learned about Eleanor Roosevelt. Remind students that Roosevelt did not begin her column until she was in her forties. Ask if that would explain important differences between her thoughts and those of the students. Also, mention that Roosevelt knew she was writing for publication. How might that knowledge affect a person's writing?

Activity 2: The Declaration of Human Rights

Review with students the function of the United Nations. Then hold a classroom discussion in which students compare their lists of similarities and differences between the Declaration of Human Rights and the Bill of Rights. Now ask students to consider writing their own Declaration of Human Rights for their class or for the entire school. You might wish to break the class into groups to work on specific sections of the document. When the document is complete, have students provide copies to other classes, the student council, and the administration. If the document provokes controversy, have students discuss why and debate suggestions for change. Have them note that there were long, hard-fought arguments over both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the American Bill of Rights. In the end, it was the resolution of those arguments that produced unparalleled statements of the rights of humans.

Activity 3: Local Volunteer Organizations

Eleanor Roosevelt volunteered much of her time to helping others, including hosting an annual picnic for the Wiltwyck School children. Most communities have volunteer organizations or local chapters of national organizations that help people who are in need. Ask students to make a list of the volunteer groups and programs in their community that are dedicated to helping others (Meals on Wheels, Big Brother/Sister programs, church groups, shelters, nursing home visits,

etc.). Then, working in small groups, ask students to choose one organization or program and write an essay in which they address the following issues: purpose of the organization; how, when, and why it was founded; if it was started by an individual benefactor or a group of people; membership; facilities used by the organization; and benefits to the community. Discuss group essays. If the school has a community service program, ask students to consider volunteering a few hours of their time.